



THE CONNOISSEUR.

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Lusit amabiliter, donec jam sævus apertam

In rabiem verti cæpit jocus. — — HOR.



THE noblest exploit of a Man of the Town, the highest proof and utmost effort of his genius and pleasantry, is the FROLICK. This piece of humour consists in playing the most wild and extravagant pranks, that wantonness and debauchery can suggest; and is the distinguishing characteristic of the Buck and Blood. These facetious gentlemen, whenever Champagne has put them in spirits, sally out "flown with insolence and wine" in quest of adventures. At such a time the more harm they do the more they show their wit; and their Frolicks, like the mirth of a monkey, are made up of mischief.

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THE Frolick formerly signified nothing more than a piece of innocent mirth and gaiety: but the modern sense of the word is much more lively and spirited. The Mohocks and Hell-Fire-Club, the heroes of the last generation, were the first who introduced these elevated Frolicks, and struck out mighty good jokes from all kinds of violence and blasphemy. The present race of Bucks commonly begin their Frolick in a tavern, and end it in the round-house, and during the course of it practise several mighty pretty pleasantries. There is a great deal of humour in what is called *beating the rounds*, that is in plain *English*, taking a tour of the principal bawdy-houses: breaking of lamps and skirmishes with watchmen are very good jests; and the insulting any dull sober fools that are quietly trudging about their business, or a rape on a modest woman, are particularly facetious. Whatever is in violation of all decency and order is an exquisite piece of wit, and in short a Frolick and *playing the devil* bear the same explanation in a modern glossary.

It is surprising how much invention there is in these exploits, and how wine inspires these gentlemen with thoughts more extraordinary and sublime, than any sober man could ever have devised. I have known a whole company start from their chairs, and begin tilting at each other merely for their diversion. Another time these exalted geniuses have cast lots which should be thrown out of the window; and at another make a bonfire of their cloaths, and run naked into the streets. I remember a little gentleman not above five feet high, who was resolved, merely for the sake of the Frolick, to lie with the Tall Woman; but the joke ended in his receiving a sound cudgelling from the hands of his *Thalestris*. It was no longer ago than last winter, that a party of jovial Templars set out an hour or two after midnight

night on a voyage to *Lisbon* in order to get good Port. They took boat at the Temple-stairs, and prudently laid in by way of provisions a cold venison pasty and two bottles of raspberry brandy: but when they imagined themselves just arrived at *Gravesend*, they found themselves suddenly over-set in *Chelsea-Reach*, and very narrowly escaped being drowned. The most innocent Frolicks of these men of humour are carried on in a literary way by advertisements in the news-papers, with which they often amuse the town; and alarm us with bottle conjurers, and persons who will jump down their own throats. Sometimes they divert themselves by imposing on their acquaintance with fictitious intrigues, and putting modest women to the blush by describing them in the public papers. Once, I remember, it was the Frolick to call together all the wet nurses that wanted a place; at another time to summon several old women to bring their male tabby cats, for which they were to expect a considerable price; and not long ago, by the proffer of a curacy, they drew all the poor parsons to *St. Paul's* coffee-house, where the Bucks themselves sat in another box to smoke their rusty wigs and brown cassocks.

BUT the highest Frolick, that can possibly be put in execution, is a genteel murder; such as running a waiter through the body, knocking an old feeble watchman's brains out with his own staff, or taking away the life of some regular scoundrel, who has not spirit enough to whore and drink like a gentleman. The noblest Frolick of this kind I ever remember happened a few years ago at a country town. While a party of Bucks were making a riot at an inn, and tossing the chairs and tables and looking-glasses into the street, the landlady was indiscreet enough to come up stairs, and interrupt their merriment with her impertinent remonstrances; upon which they immediately threw her

her out of the window after her own furniture. News was soon brought of the poor woman's death, and the whole company looked upon it as a very droll accident, and gave orders that she should be charged in the bill.

THESE wild pranks are instances of great spirit and invention; but alas! the generality of mankind have no taste for humour. Few people care to have a sword in their ribs for the sake of the joke, or to be beat to mummy or shot through the head for the diversion of the good company. They sometimes imagine the jest is carried too far, and are apt to apply the words of the old fable, "It may be sport to you, but it is death to us." For these reasons a set of these merry gentlemen are as terrible to the ordinary part of the world as a troop of Banditti; and an affair, which has been thought very high fun in *Pall-Mall* or *Covent Garden*, has been treated in a very serious manner at *Westminster Hall* or the *Old Bailey*. Our legislature has been absurd enough to be very careful of the lives of the lowest among the people; and the council for a highwayman would sooner plead distress as an excuse for discharging his pistol, than mere wantonness and Frolick. Nor do the governments abroad entertain a better opinion of this sort of humour: for it is but a few years, since a gentleman on his travels, who was completing a Town Education by the polite tour, shot a waiter through the head: but the joke was so ill received, that the gentleman was hanged within four and twenty hours. It would be adviseable therefore for these gentlemen, since the taste of the age is so incorrigible, to lay aside this high-seasoned humour. For their pistol, as it were, recoils upon themselves; and since it may produce their own deaths, it would be more prudent not to draw their wit out of their scabbards.

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OUR Ladies of quality, who have at length adopted *French* manners with *French* fashions, and thrown off all starchness and reserve with the ruff and the fardingale, are very fond of a Frolick. I have, indeed, lately observed with great pleasure the commendable attempts of the other sex to shake off the shackles of custom; and I make no doubt, but a libertine lady will soon become a very common character. If their passion for Gaming continues to encrease in the same proportion that it has for some time past, we shall very soon meet with abundance of sharpeners in petticoats, and it will be mentioned as a very familiar incident, that a party of female gamblers were seized by the constables at the gaming-table. I am also informed, that it is grown very common among the ladies to toast pretty fellows; and that they often amuse themselves with concerting schemes for an excellent Frolick. A Frolick is, indeed, the most convenient name in the world to veil an intrigue; and it is a great pity, that husbands and fathers should ever object to it. I can see no harm in a lady's going disguised to mob it in the gallery at the play house; and could not but smile at the pretty innocent wanton, who carried the joke so far as to accompany a strange gentleman to a bagnio; but when she came there, was surpris'd to find that he was fond of a Frolick as well as herself, and offered her violence. But I particularly admire the spirit of that lady, who had such true relish for a Frolick, as to go with her gallant to the Masquerade, though she knew he had no breeches under his Domino.

I most heartily congratulate the fine ladies and gentlemen of the age on the spirit with which they pursue their diversions; and I look upon a bold Frolick as the peculiar privilege of a person of fashion. The ladies undoubtedly see a great deal of pleasantry in an intrigue, and

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mimick the drefs and manners of the courtesans very happily and facetiously: while the gentlemen, among many other new fancies, have made the old blunder of the Merry Andrew, appear no longer ridiculous, and are mightily pleased with the *comical humours of a murder*. The Frolicks now in vogue will probably continue to be the amusements of the polite world for a long time; but whenever the fashion is about to vary, I beg leave to propose the Frolick recommended, if I remember right, to the Duke of Wharton by Dr. Swift. "When you are tired of your
 " other Frolicks, I would have you take up the Frolick of
 " BEING GOOD; and take my word for it, you will find
 " it the most agreeable Frolick you ever practised in your
 " life.

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